

VZCZCXRO8340
PP RUEHAG RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHLH RUEHNEH RUEHPW RUEHROV RUEHSL
RUEHSR
DE RUEHAH #1352 2961358
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 231358Z OCT 09
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3647
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5806
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3514
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3378
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4048
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 4019

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 001352

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN; STATE FOR MED

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/23/2019

TAGS: [SOCI](#) [PGOV](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: HOSPITALS SWAMPED WITH SICK CHILDREN

REF: ASHGABAT 1329

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Sylvia Reed Curran. Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

11. (C) Post's Foreign Service Health Practitioner and locally employed medical officer received more information on 23 October about the spread of upper respiratory illnesses in schoolchildren in Turkmenistan. Doctors at the Turkish-run Central Hospital, considered the country's best health facility, said they are inundated with children with upper respiratory illnesses. Other hospitals are also overcrowded with sick children. Pediatricians described the situation to Embassy's local doctor as "really bad." Many of the children have tested positive for Rotavirus and some with Hepatitis A, both of which U.S. children are vaccinated against. (NOTE: Although Hepatitis A is not primarily an upper respiratory disease, it does weaken the immune system, making children more susceptible to other illnesses. END NOTE.) Other children have symptoms that are consistent with a cold, the flu, or a variety of other illness. When Embassy's local doctor asked other local physicians and hospital personnel about H1N1, many refused to talk.

12. (C) Doctors at the Central Hospital said that Turkmenistan does have H1N1 testing capability. However, the Chief of the International Medical Center told us that Ministry of Health has instructed hospitals to stop testing for flu. If a suspicious case presents, the patient is directed to Ministry of Health for further testing. There is only one location, the Infectious Disease Center, that can do diagnostic testing, and where all of the information will be kept. The Central Hospital does have the Type A influenza quick test and had seen some positive results.

13. (SBU) Reports continue to surface about children being out of school. A third grade teacher at the Ashgabat International School said that only three of her class of nine were in school on 23 October. Contacts of the DATT who have children attending the Russian school said that a quarter to a half of the students are staying home, but some of those may be home to prevent them from catching the flu.

14. (SBU) Embassy Ashgabat is prepared to treat H1N1 or seasonal flu. Seasonal flu vaccinations are scheduled for

employees and families 29 October through 4 November, and the medical unit has stocks of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Tamiflu. The medical unit has distributed H1N1 booklets in Russian and English and has placed posters around the Embassy about sanitary practices to prevent the spread of flu.

15. (C) COMMENT: The Government of Turkmenistan is unlikely to release information about the upper respiratory disease that is infecting so many children. The move to have all H1N1 testing done at one facility is very likely a move to control information. Also, the Government has not released any public health notices. The Embassy will treat flu cases aggressively, as if they were H1N1, just to err on the side of caution. END COMMENT.
CURRAN